

THE PROBLEM?

39% of the UK workforce comes from lower socio-economic backgrounds (SEBs). In museums, libraries and archives, it is just 5.2% (1,2).

People from low SEBs remain significantly underrepresented in leadership and decision-making roles (3).

Low SEB lives, labour, culture and creativity remain underrepresented in what museums collect, research and interpretation (4).

People from lower socio-economic backgrounds remain less likely to visit museums (5,6).

WE ARE

a network of museum people from low SEBs and active agents for change. We use our lived experience and professional expertise to address issues of inequity in Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums (the GLAM sector).

WE BELIEVE

museums cannot claim to be for everyone while people from low SEBs remain excluded from their workforces, leadership, collections and audiences.

Everyone should be able to enter the sector, build a sustainable career, shape decisions and see their lives and histories taken seriously.

WE KNOW

class inequality is structural. It will not be solved by asking people who have been deprived of social, cultural and economic capital to become more resilient, better networked or better at navigating systems built without them in mind.

Institutions must change – not the people they exclude. Representation matters. But representation without power is not equality.

WE RECOGNISE

class intersects with race, disability, gender, sexuality, migration, caring responsibilities and geography. Tackling class inequality makes museums more equitable for everyone.

OUR DEMANDS

1. Know who works for you: Collect, publish and act on socio-economic background data across staff, freelancers, leadership and boards.

2. Pay people properly: Pay at least the Real Living Wage. End unpaid internships and exploitative or unnecessarily insecure employment.

3. End privilege-based hiring: Remove unnecessary postgraduate qualifications, unpaid experience requirements, opaque recruitment and reliance on personal networks.

4. Open up power: Increase low SEB representation in leadership, boards and decision-making, and publish progress.

5. Make progression possible: Address class bias in workplace culture, promotion, professional development and access to networks.

6. Change what museums collect and say: Embed low SEB histories, lives, labour, culture and expertise within collecting, research, exhibitions and interpretation.

7. Share power with communities: Work with low SEB communities from the beginning, including in deciding priorities.

8. Make class equality a public duty: Government, funders and sector bodies to embed socio-economic equality in cultural policy, funding and accountability

(1) Brook, O., O'Brien, D. and Taylor, M. (2021) *Culture is Bad for You: Inequality in the Cultural and Creative Industries*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

(2) McAndrew, S., O'Brien, D., Taylor, M. and Wang, R. (2024) *Audiences and workforces in arts, culture and heritage*.

(3) Wreyford, N., O'Brien, D. and Dent, T. (2021) *Creative Majority: An APPG for Creative Diversity Inquiry into Creativity, Diversity and Social Mobility in the Creative Sector*. London: King's College London.

(4) Fleming, D. (2021) 'How British museums have failed the working class', in Chynoweth, R. (ed.) *Museums and the Working Class*. 1st edn. London: Routledge.

(5) Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) (2016) *Museums and Galleries: Taking Part Focus Report 2015/16*. London: DCMS.

(6) Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) (2020) *Museums: Taking Part Survey 2019/20*. London: DCMS.